

## Extension's role in assisting rural agricultural communities

Mr. Chairman and members of this committee.

For the record I am Jamie Doggett of White Sulphur Springs. As a cattle rancher and retired Meagher County Commissioner I would like to briefly reflect on Extension's role in assisting rural ag communities.

First let me say that several years ago I was here before this committee, as a Commissioner asking for your support for an Extension Agent in Meagher County. My friend Dave Lewis carried that legislation successfully. So, I say thank you for helping my rural community, which also voted to support the effort with their local tax dollars. Our first agent, Sarah Hamlen sat down with the Commissioners to determine the needs of our county and its people and how MSU Extension could best serve those needs. She worked with producers, 4-H kids and their parents, and the community to get us off the ground and in to the Extension family. One program that she brought in from MSU was the Horizons program that gathered us together in several round-table discussions. Anyone could participate. We got to know new people, reacquaint with old friends and move our community forward. I still hear folks talk about the program, how much they enjoyed sitting down with their neighbors and trying to come up with solutions to make our place better.

Our current agent Nico Cantalupo has a strong ag background. He has helped many producers since coming to Meagher County. He works with us on crop and insect disease problems by identifying the

bugs, recommending effective pesticide selection and making sure the results are cost effective and timely.

Because of recent drought conditions he works with local ranchers, sharing strategies for cattle herd size, culling considerations, cow herd nutrition and ration balancing and annual forage production so we get the best results for our operation and not a cookie cutter solution. He is proactive and reactive to current crop and livestock threats through the use of best management practices.

Last summer a grain producer noticed significant winter wheat damage. Nico identified the insect causing the damage, worked with the producer by outlining steps needed, from notifying the crop adjuster for insurance purposes, identifying all pesticides that would be effective to kill the bugs and strategizing the best end result. The field was replanted with barley. The timeframe from the first call saying "I have a problem in my winter wheat" to the time the barley was planted took 72 hours. That is pretty amazing!

Extension helps Montana agricultural producers sustain a way of life through the use of research based technologies, such as artificial insemination, precision farming, soil health, ration balancing, and best management practices. They help us contribute to our nation and global communities' food and fiber needs, while protecting our natural resources.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

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